

Golden Sands

Over eons, rain and storm waves have pounded the bluffs and beach here, exposing quantities of gold. In 1850, prospectors who were headed inland to known mining areas happened upon gold in the dark sands. Word spread quickly in San Francisco, setting off a rush of people to Gold Bluffs in search of wealth.

Early attempts to collect “gold as fine as flour” were not productive, so discouraged miners moved on to local communities in Crescent City and Eureka. Eventually, the Union Gold Bluffs Mining Company built flumes on the bluffs above the beach at Major Creek and Espa Lagoon (pictured below). At the end of the flume was a wash house where mercury-covered copper plates trapped the “flour” gold. Successful operations ran here into the early 1900s.



When the tide receded and gold appeared on the beach, men stuffed their saddlebags with sand. Mules hauled the sand up the bluffs where prospectors loaded the flume. The washing process of the flume rid the sand of silt and dirt on the way to the wash house.

